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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S. FOREIGN POLICY, U.S.-CHINA-TAIWAN
RELATIONS

11. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused April 29 news coverage on the swine flu outbreak and the Taiwan government's anti-epidemic plan; and on the developments in cross-Straits relations. Several papers also carried reports from the "Defense News" saying that the United States is expected to sell 60 UH60M Black Hawk Utility helicopters to Taiwan in the third quarter of 2009. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a column in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" discussed the new "Obamaism" and the resurgence of U.S. Republican neo-conservatism. The article said the comeback of neo-conservatism will undoubtedly pose new challenges to the Obama administration, which is trying to redress the mistakes made by the previous U.S. administration and make new achievements in terms of the U.S. diplomatic tactics. An op-ed in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times," written by John Tkacik, a retired U.S. foreign service officer, discussed the Obama administration's Asia policy and the possibility of a "Taiwan Policy Review." The article said "democratic Asia needs U.S. leadership if it is to balance China, and the test of the Obama administration's Asia policy will be to provide that leadership." End summary.

12. U.S. Foreign Policy

"U.S. Republican Neo-conservatism Resurges"

The "International Lookout" column in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 150,000] wrote (4/29):

"The 'Obamaism' upheld by U.S. President Barack Obama in terms of U.S. foreign policy is in reality still based on the principle of 'the U.S. leading [the world],' except for the fact that he is a realist. Being pragmatic is not a bad thing; it can help to look closely and tell what should be done and what should not. For those tasks of which the United States is competent and capable, it can handle; while for those it cannot, it can seek cooperation [from other countries]. That is why Obama said during the Summit of the Americas: 'The United States cannot act alone but must achieve its leadership by setting examples.' Not to act alone means that [it] will seek cooperation, and setting examples indicates that it must first try what it can. Such is the difference between obstinacy and pragmatism. Both [directions] are meant to maintain the hegemony of the United States, except that the former is to act recklessly, while the latter is to act smartly. ...

"[Former U.S. President George W.] Bush stepped down in the wake of the failure of the war in Iraq, giving neo-conservatism a major setback. But it was not long before these people staged a comeback ... and formed the 'Foreign Policy Initiative.' The neo-cons believe that the 21st century will be dictated by a struggle between the democratic powers led by the United States and the dictatorships headed by China and Russia. ... When Obama redressed the foreign policy mistakes made by Bush and seeks to make new achievements in terms of the diplomatic tactics, the neo-conservatism undoubtedly has created challenges to the Obamaism.

13. U.S.-China-Taiwan Relations

"An Obama TPR: Too Little, Too Late?"

John Tkacik, a retired chief of China intelligence at the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research in the first Clinton Administration, opined in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (4/29):

"While reports of an imminent Taiwan Policy Review (TPR) are premature, it would be a useful exercise as part of a global strategic review of China's emerging pre-eminence. ... There is no wisdom in confronting China head-on in Asia, and a TPR by the administration of US President Barack Obama must take this into account. But if the US is to balance China's looming rise with a coalition of Asian democracies, Taiwan must be a key policy element.

...

Unfortunately, 'geostrategic considerations,' when it comes to Taiwan (or China, for that matter) have long been absent in Washington policy circles. ...

"Taiwan's significance in Asia is eclipsed in this China fantasy. Taiwanese now feel they have nowhere left to go but China. The rest of Asia watches US-Taiwan trends to see if the US might draw some line with China. All Asian governments understand Taiwan's strategic importance to the US. I say this despite the comments of my good friend and former Chinese-language classmate, American Institute in Taiwan Chairman Ray Burghardt, who said on March 19 that 'a geostrategic character to American policy toward Taiwan ... isn't really there.' Taiwan's strategic value was not discussed in the Condoleezza Rice State Department or in the Bush White House. However, Taiwan's significance to US security is not dismissed by defense and intelligence officials who observe China's expanding RELATIONS

military power: They must plan for weapons systems 20 years into the future and China's military, naval, missile and cyberspace modernization keeps them awake. Taiwan's geographic location in Asia and its geopolitical disposition are essential to monitoring these developments. ...

"More important, Taiwan is the US' poster-child for democracy in Asia; the US' 10th-largest export market; and the world's fourth-largest foreign exchange reserves holder. Taiwan's GDP is bigger than any in Southeast Asia. Taiwan's population is bigger than Australia's. In short, US equanimity at the prospect of democratic Taiwan's absorption by communist China is a clear signal to the rest of Asia that the US has bought on to the 'Beijing Consensus' - Asia may as well go along, too. Sooner or later there will be an Obama 'Taiwan Policy Review.' But it won't amount to much. An Obama TPR will judge that the powerful momentum in cross-strait dynamics is pushing Taiwan rapidly into full economic dependence on China. It will conclude that Taiwan's inextricable economic dependence on China - absent counterbalancing action - will quickly drive the country beyond its 'tipping point' toward political and, ultimately, security dependence on Beijing. At that point, Obama can dust off his hands and say: 'Oh well, I really wanted to help Taiwan, but it was too late.' Some will say, 'It's not so bad, look at Hong Kong.' Others will say, 'Oh well, it was Bush's fault.' ...

"Obama is unlikely to be confrontational with China or anyone else. But democratic Asia needs US leadership if it is to balance China, and the test of the Obama administration's Asia policy will be to provide that leadership. A Taiwan Policy Review will only be a small subset of that calculation. Now that Campbell has been nominated, Obama has an outline of an 'Asia Team' that can begin to reassess the US' erosion in the Western Pacific. If Campbell can't stop the collapse of the US' Asian interests in Taiwan, it's hard to see where he can do it."

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